

Suicide Prevention Toolkit

Suicide is preventable.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business.

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Suicide is everyone's business

Table of contents

Introduction

- 03 Purpose of the toolkit & key statistics
- 04 Local statistics on suicide

Things to look out for

- 06 - Checklist of some of the most common triggers to look out for
- 07 Breaking the Stigma - talking about suicide matters

How to start a conversation

- 08 - Pause for Thought
- 10 Conversation starter ideas & suggestions

5 Steps to HOPE

- 12 Ask - Conversation starters
- 13 Listen to really understand
- 14 Support them to stay safe
- 15 SEEK HELP if you're out of your depth
- 16 SELF-CARE is key

Myth Busters

- 17 - Common myth busters
- 19

Useful tools

- 20 Recap of Key messages
- 21 Useful helplines
- 22 - Useful Apps for younger children,
- 24 teenagers & adults

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**Ask.
Tell.
Save lives.**

Suicide
prevention
begins with
All of US

Actions
big or small
make a
difference



Introduction



"Suicide doesn't end the chances of things getting worse, it eliminates the possibility of it ever getting any better".

Background



In response to a request from the Third Sector, this resource has been developed to help them support people in our communities who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts.



In 2022 there was an increase of 9 probable deaths by suicide across Scotland to

762

Gender split



Female suicide deaths increased by 18, while male deaths decreased by 9.

Our role in suicide prevention

Suicide is everyone's business. Being aware of some of the most common signs to look out for, and not being afraid to ask someone if they are having suicidal thoughts, is vital.

The statistics



Men are four times more likely to die by suicide, with the 45 - 54 age group most at risk. In Scotland, 2 people die every day as a result of suicide.



65-74 years old

Suicide in 65-74 year olds has doubled in four years and is the highest since 2002





LOCAL STATISTICS on suicide

"Sometimes even to live is an act of courage"

762

probable deaths by suicide in 2022 across Scotland, 51 across Ayrshire and Arran

73%

of probable deaths by suicide in 2022 across Scotland were men, down from 75% in 2021

**Age
45 - 54**

is the highest crude rate in both men and women

1 in 5

deaths by suicide was by someone under the age of 30

24

people died by suicide in North Ayrshire in 2022, 19 male deaths and 5 female deaths



For every suicide, there may be 20 suicide attempts or more.

Many people who attempt suicide go on to lead fulfilling lives.



Learn the warning signs of suicide and you might save a life.



WARNING SIGNS to look for

"When you feel like giving up, just remember the reason why you held on for so long"

Talking About

- Experiencing unbearable pain
- Feeling trapped
- Killing themselves
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Making funeral arrangements
- Frequently talking about death

Behaviour

- Withdrawing from activities
- Acting restlessly
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Isolation from friends and family
- Giving things away
- Self harm like cutting behaviours

Mood

- Depression
- Rage / aggressiveness
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Lack of interest
- Humiliation
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Negative view of self
- Feeling alone / isolated
- Drastic changes in mood

This is not an exhaustive list. Please be on the look out for any changes in behaviour that might be unusual to an individual.

If in doubt ASK!

Stigma stops people seeking out **help**. Its important that we consider **language** and **tone** when we talk about suicide.

Jamie Tworkowski

"Committed Suicide"	✗	Try to	✓	"Died by suicide"
AVOID			USE	

The word "committed" is associated with criminal behaviour or sin. Changing the phrase decriminalises the act.

"Failed Suicide"	✗	Try to	✓	"Suicide attempt"
AVOID			USE	

Words that glamorise suicide attempts, like "failed" or "unsuccessful" should be avoided.

"Successful Suicide"	✗	Try to	✓	"Took their own life"
AVOID			USE	

The word "successful" suggests that suicide is the desired outcome.

"Suicidal"	✗	Try to	✓	"Suicidal thoughts"
AVOID			USE	

We don't want to define someone by their experience with suicide, they are more than their suicidal thoughts

"you're not going to do something stupid?"	✗	Try to	✓	"Are you thinking of suicide?"
AVOID			USE	

Implying that it's stupid belittles their feelings. Suicide is serious.

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PAUSE for THOUGHT

“A semicolon is used when an author could've chosen to end their sentence but chose not to. The author is **YOU** and the sentence is **YOUR LIFE.**”



We never know what is **really** going on with someone, and although they might **appear** okay, even **happy**, and may say they are **fine**, it's not always their **reality**.

“No matter how happy somebody may *appear* there could be something seriously bothering them deep down, especially if you can see a difference in the person. If somebody *seems* down to you and they answer *I'm Fine....* (they might be) but a few more prying questions could go a long way.”

A quote from someone who was battling depression, who got the 'i'm fine/Save me' tattoo to acknowledge his own battle.

How?

Conversation Starters

If you are worried ASK

"There is hope. Even when your brain tells you there isn't."

John Green

Express concern

- "I'm worried because I've noticed you (insert things you've noticed). How can I help you through this?"
- "It seems you've been up and down lately. I've been there myself. Talking about it can really help"
- "How are you coping with what's happening in your life?"
- "How are you really feeling?"
- "Do you ever feel like just giving up?"

Ask directly

- "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- "Are you thinking about taking your own life?"
- "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
- "Have you ever thought about suicide before, or tried to harm yourself?"
- "Do you have a plan?"

Empathise

- "Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?"
- "You're not alone in this. I'm here for you and want to help."
- "What you're saying sounds really painful. I don't have all the answers, but I'm here to listen"
- "I'm so glad you told me this. I understand you are really struggling. Let's keep talking"

Keep the door open

- If they're not comfortable talking to you, ask them if there's someone else they could talk to.
- If you're not worried about their immediate safety, you can let them know you'll always be available if they want to talk.
- Ask them if it's ok for you to check in with them again.

You don't have to be an **expert** to talk about **suicide**.
Check-in with someone **today!**

How?

Conversation Starters A few ideas....

"There are far, far better things ahead than anything we leave behind."

C.S. Lewis

Offer support

- "How best can I support you right now?"
- "You may not believe it now, but the way you are feeling will change."
- "Do you have access to anything that can be used to harm yourself?"

Seek help

- "Have you thought about getting help?"
- "Have you spoken to your doctor or any other professional about how you feel?"
- "Can I help you make a call to someone to ask for their support?"

Encourage them

- "When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off and call me or another friend."
- "Do you have any alcohol or drugs in the house? Would it maybe better if I took them?"
- "Is there anyone I can call who can come and stay with you?"

Refer on

Ultimately, when talking to someone you believe to be having suicidal thoughts, you should always try to ensure they get professional help.

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Suicide is everyone's business

*"If you're looking for a sign not to
kill yourself, THIS is it"*

Ask

Talk to someone if you are worried about them. Be **open about suicide**, it's one of the most helpful things you can do. Ask if they are having **suicidal thoughts**.



Listen

Listen actively to what is being said and try to read between the lines. Use open questions to get them talking.

Support

Help them plan how to stay safe and get the help they need. Refer them on to other groups, services, and resources that can help.



It's OK to get help

Seek Help

Seek immediate help from a professional or the emergency services if you believe someone is in imminent danger of taking their own life. Don't leave them alone.

Self-care

Look after your own wellbeing. Consider working in pairs. Don't keep secrets when someone's life may be at stake.





Ask if you're worried about someone

✓ Know the signs ✓ Find the words ✓ Reach out

Consider your approach

- Be *observant*, try to recognise the *warning signs* and start a conversation.
- Choose a *time and place* where you can be *alone* with the other person.
- Begin the conversation *calmly*.
- Tailor your approach to suit the *individual and circumstances*.
- Remember it's always *worth the risk* to ask the question. It could save a *life*.
- Think about your approach. You need to be in the *right frame of mind*.
- If you say something you later think you shouldn't have, *don't panic*, apologise and bring the conversation back round.

Be **direct** and **open**.
Ask "are you thinking
about suicide"

Let them know
specific things that
concern you

Help them **open up** by
asking open
questions

Try not to use vague or
negative language like
"you're not going to do
anything stupid"

Try not to **push them**
to open up faster than
they are comfortable
with. Go at **their pace**

Try not to act shocked
or upset. Let them talk
without judgement



Actively Listen to understand



Remember It's OK to say Suicide



Trust your instinct



- Remember - *talking about suicide* does not put the idea in someone's head and usually they are *relieved*.
- *Asking directly* and using the word "suicide" establishes that you and the person are talking about the same thing and lets the person know you are willing to talk.
- Give yourself *plenty of time*, you don't want to rush.
- Look for non verbal queues and changes in their *body language*. *Adapt your approach* accordingly.
- Try to maintain *open, encouraging body language* throughout.

Try to make eye contact and give them your **full attention**

Try to listen, empathise and try not to minimise the situation

Recap and summarise what they say. Try to **acknowledge** their emotions

Try not to give advice or lecture them. Show love and compassion

Try to let them speak without **interrupting**

Try not to feel that it's your job to solve all of their issues



Support them to stay safe

**Suicide is a leading cause of death & it's also
one of the most preventable.**

Offer practical support

- You don't need any *special training* to show someone you care about them.
- Look for *information that might be helpful*. When someone is seeking help they may feel worried about making the right choice, or feel that they have no control over their situation.
- Help to write down *lists of questions* that the person you're supporting wants to ask their doctor, health worker or other support.
- Ask them if there are any *specific ways you can help them to keep safe*. For example, contact a family member or friend, remove the means.
- Once they are safe, consider *other ways you could support them through their problem*.

Try to help them connect to a **support system** so they have others to reach out to for help

If you believe they are in imminent danger, don't leave them alone

ASK if they have a **plan** and if possible agree to **remove** what they are thinking of using

Try to check in regularly. Following up in the aftermath of a crisis can help keep them alive

Don't agree to **keep secrets**. A person's life may be at stake

Try not to carry the burden on your own.
Ask for **HELP**

HELP



SEEK HELP if you feel out of your depth

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"To anyone out there hurting, it's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. It's a sign of strength"

Barack Obama

✨ Be A.L.E.R.T. ✨

- Ask if they are thinking about suicide
- Listen and show you care
- Encourage them to get help
- Right Now is the time to keep a person safe
- Tell Someone because dealing with someone in distress or with suicidal thoughts can be difficult. Sharing your thoughts with others can help you.

What you can't do:

- Force someone to talk to you. It can take time for someone to feel able to talk openly.
- Force someone to get help (if they're over 18, and it's not an emergency situation).
- See a doctor for someone else.

Try to support them to make the **first call** to an appropriate **helpline** or other **professional**

Share your concerns with a colleague

Consider requesting a **wellbeing check** from the **police** if appropriate

If in doubt, contact Social Services to discuss raising an Adult Protection Concern

If someone has **made plans** or has **harmed themselves**, get medical help or call **999**

Try not to let your concerns consume your own home life. Seek out professional help for the person



Self Care is key

*"You are proof that beauty can grow in the
most difficult of places."*

Wednesday Holmes

Look after yourself too

- Talking to someone about suicide can be very *emotional and challenging*.
- To be able to care for and support someone else, you need to *take care of yourself too*.
- It's important to look after your own *physical and mental wellbeing*, including getting enough sleep, eating regularly, and doing things you enjoy or find relaxing.

Be active and **connect with others**. Seek out help if you need it

Establish boundaries that you are comfortable with to protect yourself and the person

Be **kind** to yourself. **Don't** be tempted to **blame yourself** or feel responsible for what is happening

It can feel easier to take time for yourself if you make a support plan with the person you are concerned about

Find **support for yourself**. Talk to a family member, call a helpline or join a peer support group

10 ways to improve your mental health and wellbeing

www.nhs.uk/better-health

Call well and drink sensibly

Accept and love who you are

Keep physically active

Care for others

Take a break

Take time to do things you are good at and enjoy

Keep in touch with others

Don't be afraid to ask for help



Myth Busters

**“Your story matters – and it isn’t finished.
There’s so much left to be written.”**

Asking someone if they’re suicidal might put the idea in their head

MYTH



FACT

Asking someone if they’re suicidal could protect them

Talking about suicide not only reduces the stigma, but also allows individuals to seek help, and think about what they could do to keep safe. It is usually a relief when someone asks and allows them to talk it through. It is safer to ask about suicide than not to ask about suicide. Asking someone if they’re having suicidal thoughts can give them permission to tell you how they feel and let them know they are not a burden.

If a person is serious about taking their own life then there's nothing you can do

MYTH



FACT

Many suicidal crises can be relatively short-lived

Most people who feel suicidal do not want to end their lives, they just want the situation they are in or the way they are feeling to end. They want a way out of their distress and this appears to them at that moment, the only option. The distinction may seem small, but it is very important. It’s why talking through other options at the right time is so vital. Safely intervening and interrupting the process can keep people safe until other services can take over.

People who threaten suicide are just seeking attention

MYTH



FACT

Anyone talking about suicide needs serious attention

They are in pain and may feel hopeless, overwhelmed and a burden to others. Most people who die by suicide have talked about it first – we should always take seriously anyone talking about suicide. Do not dismiss a suicide attempt as simply being “attention-seeking”. This may belittle and dismiss their feelings. It is likely the person has tried to gain attention and, therefore, this attention is needed. The attention they get may well save their lives.



Myth Busters

"Never fear the shadows, they simply mean there's a light shining somewhere nearby"

Winnie the Pooh

Most suicides happen with no warning

MYTH



FACT

Warning signs, either in behaviour or through words and language, go before a suicide

Most people struggling with thoughts of suicide try to communicate that they need help, sometimes at an unconscious level. This may not always be obvious and may be subtle changes in behaviour or use of language. It is important to be alert to potential warning signs and be prepared to ask about suicide if you are concerned for someone else. These subtle warning behaviours and comments can easily be missed or spread across several people. If you are worried- ask how they are feeling. Start the conversation.

People thinking about suicide are mentally ill

MYTH



FACT

One in five people have thought about suicide at some time in their life

Suicide is complex and it is often most likely a combination of individual, relationship, community, and societal risk factors that can increase the possibility that a person will attempt suicide. Most do not have a diagnosed mental illness at the time of death. Some who die by suicide have struggled with their mental health and some have no mental illness. There are some whose mental state meets psychiatric criteria for mental illness and who need psychiatric help. Thoughts of suicide are part of the human condition.

People who die by suicide are selfish and take the easy way out

MYTH



FACT

People who attempt suicide are suffering with deep feelings of despair, hopelessness, worthlessness, or other overwhelming feelings

They often feel they are a burden to others. They may believe that suicide is the only way out to end their intense suffering and pain. Most people at the time of their death will think that everyone will be better off without them.



Myth Busters

“Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.”

Once an individual is suicidal, they will always remain suicidal

MYTH



FACT

Active suicidal ideation is often short-term and specific to certain situations

Suicide is usually an attempt to end painful emotions and thoughts. Once these thoughts go or a situation changes, so will the suicidal ideation. Research shows that the most intense periods of feeling suicidal will change after around 24 hours and suicidal thoughts can be interrupted with timely intervention.

Some people will, however, continue to have times in their life when they consider suicide, and extra support is needed for these people. Understanding some of their triggers and signs that they may be having these thoughts again can actually help them to know when to seek help and keep safe. Safety plans and awareness can help prevent the thoughts turning into actions.

With thanks to:

[Grassroots Suicide Prevention | Educating, Connecting, Campaigning \(prevent-suicide.org.uk\)](#)



Recap of **Key** Messages

Ask

- If you are worried about someone **start a conversation**
- **Be direct**, ask if they are thinking about suicide
- Try not to be **shocked or upset** by what they say
- Consider your **language choices** and try not to use negative words or phrases

Listen

- Try to listen, **empathise** and not minimise the situation
- Show them that **you care** and are there to support them
- Show **love and compassion** and try not to give advice

Support them to stay safe

- Try to identify **someone** that can **stay** with them to help keep them safe
- Check if they **have a plan** of what they will do, and if possible **remove** the potential **means** to harm themselves
- If you believe them to be in **imminent danger**, don't leave them **alone**

Seek Help

- Try to help them to **call for support**. A doctor, other health professional or helpline
- Help them to **create a plan** to keep themselves safe
- Consider requesting a **wellbeing check** from the police, or raising an **Adult or Child Protection Concern**
- If you believe someone to be in **imminent danger** **stay with them** and call 999

Self Care

- Establish **boundaries** with the person to protect both of you
- **Seek out help** for yourself if you need it
- Don't **blame** yourself or feel responsible

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stay safe

HELP

self care

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USEFUL HELPLINES Key Contacts

"If you're going through hell, keep going."

Winston Churchill

SAMARITANS



Available
24 hours
a day year
round

Every **7 seconds** they
respond to a call for help.
No judgement or
pressure.
They are available for
ANYONE who needs
someone.

Call 116 123
or email
jo@samaritans.org
www.samaritans.org

PAPYRUS
PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE



Available
9am 12.00
midnight
year round

Are you, or is a young
person you know, not
coping with life?
Papyrus are available for
confidential suicide
prevention advice for
young people .

Call free
0800 068 4141
or email
pat@papyrus-uk.org
www.papyrus-uk.org

SPACE
BREATHING



Available
Weekdays
6pm - 2am
Weekends
6pm - 6am

Sometimes our thoughts
and feelings overwhelm
us to the point where it
becomes difficult to cope
with everyday life.
If you need help **Breathing
Space** are there .

Call free
0800 83 85 87
www.breathingspace.scot

SAMH
for Scotland's mental health



Available
Weekdays
9am - 6pm

SAMH provides
information & support for
people across Scotland
with **mental health
problems**. They have an
information and support
service available.

Call
0344 800 0550
or email
info@samh.org.uk
www.samh.org.uk

NHS 24: Contact free on 111

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USEFUL APPS & Website

"If you're going through hell, keep going."

Winston Churchill

Apps & websites to support mental health: Younger Children



Hospichill

Designed originally to help children relax and stay calm in preparation for hospital visits. The app has lots of visualisation and relaxation tools to help children whenever they are feeling worried or stressed.



Stop, Breathe & Think (Google Play only)

A mindful games App for children, to help them discover and develop their superpowers of sleep, being calm, learning to breathe or to resolve conflicts. Parents can support children to check into how they are feeling using fun emojis and try recommended mindful missions and meditations tuned to their emotions.



Laugh and learn as you help a Sesame Street monster friend calm down and solve everyday challenges. This research-based app helps your child learn Sesame's "Breathe, Think, Do" strategy for problem-solving. Tap and touch to help the monster friend take deep breaths, think of plans, and try them out!



Smiling Mind

This is a free Mindfulness App with a wide range of meditations and relaxation tracks for all ages from young children to adults. Just as we eat well and stay fit to keep our body healthy, mindfulness meditation is about looking after the mind. The App also has programmes for sport, the classroom, and the workplace.



USEFUL APPS & Websites

"If you're going through hell, keep going."

Winston Churchill

Apps & websites to support mental health: Teenagers & Adolescents



Exam Stress

This App is for people who suffer from exam anxiety or from feeling stressed during their studies. The app is developed by the Student Counselling Service, who on a daily basis, helps students all over the country with psychological and social problems. It derives from many years of experience in helping students to manage their exam anxiety.



Smiling Mind

This is a free Mindfulness App with a wide range of meditations and relaxations tracks for all ages from young children to adults. Just as we eat well and stay fit to keep our body healthy, mindfulness meditation is about looking after the mind. The app also has programmes for sport, the classroom and the workplace.



Calm Harm

This App provides advice and information that helps to resist or manage the urge to self harm. There are a range of activities to choose from plus other features that help you learn to identify and manage emotions with positive impact. The App can be personalised and made private.



Super Better

SuperBetter builds resilience- the ability to stay strong, motivated and optimistic, even in the face of change or challenging times. Playing SuperBetter unlocks heroic potential to overcome tough situations and achieve goals.

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USEFUL APPS & Websites

"If you're going through hell, keep going."

Winston Churchill

Apps & websites to support mental health: Adults, Teenagers & Adolescents



NHS Ayrshire & Arran

Free NHS app with lots of simple information and self help tools to help us ALL to look after our mental health and wellbeing. Also contains useful signposting to resources and additional support. Search the App store for the 'NHS Ayrshire & Arran container app' then select mental health.



Moodfit

This App allows you to create and track a set of daily goals to help improve mental wellbeing. It also helps you to understand the link between mood and other factors like sleep and exercise, with customised daily goals. Additional features include gratitude, breathing exercises and mindfulness which can all reduce the effects of stress, anxiety and depression.



MindShift CBT

An App that can help you cope with anxiety. Mind Shift will help you learn how to relax, develop more helpful ways of thinking, and identify active steps that will help you take charge of your anxiety. It has a range of strategies to deal with everyday anxiety, as well as specific tools to help you face challenging situations.



Catch It

Catch It is a joint project between the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester, to help users better understand their moods through use of an ongoing diary. The free app illustrates some of the key principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). It may support users to recognise, reflect on and challenge their unhelpful thinking patterns which can contribute to anxiety and low self-esteem.

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Thank you!

A great example of
coproduction at
work in our community

North Ayrshire Recovery College (RAMH)

Penumbra

KA Leisure

CHAP

Dalry Community Development Hub

Garnock Valley Men's Shed

Three Town's Mens Shed

Saltcoats Link-up

YES Your Entire Self

North Ayrshire Forum on Disability

Church of Scotland

TACT

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**Thank you to all of the Third Sector groups &
people involved in developing this toolkit.**